

Here is what he said:

If there is a fear of war in the region, it will be one fueled by Iran and its proxies and exacerbated by an agreement that allows Iran to possess an industrial-sized nuclear program and enough money in sanctions relief to significantly continue to fund its hegemonic intentions.

This was said by our colleague from New Jersey, who was the ranking member on the Foreign Relations Committee back in 2015.

Here is my colleague from New York, the current Democratic leader, and what he said: “Under this agreement, Iran would receive at least \$50 billion in the near future and would undoubtedly use some of that money to redouble its efforts to create even more trouble in the Middle East and, perhaps, beyond.” That was from the Democratic leader in that same year.

He acknowledged that the hard-liners’ “No. 1 goal [is] strengthening Iran’s armed forces and pursuing even more harmful military and terrorist actions.”

This is exactly the situation President Trump inherited in 2017, as emboldened Tehran was committed to spending its new resources on military capabilities, exporting terrorism, and pursuing regional hegemony. So President Trump was right to seek a better deal and apply maximum pressure on Tehran until it changed its destabilizing behavior. Tough sanctions are compounding the economic pain the mullahs have brought on their own people through corrupt mismanagement.

Iran is responding to this legitimate and judicious application of diplomatic and economic pressure the way it has effectively operated for years—what do they always do?—through violence, attacks against commercial vessels in international waters, sponsored attacks against civilian targets in the Gulf, and then last week’s unprovoked attack on our unarmed aircraft.

We face a choice here. Will we legitimize and incentivize Iran’s use of terror and aggression or will we stay resolute and apply appropriate and proportionate pressure until Tehran respects the fundamental norms of international behavior?

Last Thursday, President Trump consulted with a bipartisan group of congressional leaders and national security chairmen and ranking members. The President weighed advice from a number of sources. It is clear he was listening to congressional leaders. Clearly, the President wants to avoid war—hence the deliberate and judicious approach he has taken since the shoot-down; hence his repeated efforts to give Iran’s leaders an off-ramp toward negotiations.

Nevertheless, there is a general consensus that this act of aggression cannot stand. Tehran must understand it may not respond to legitimate diplomatic pressure with illegitimate violence. It is in our national security interest for the United States to deter

attacks against American forces that are operating legally in international waters and to honor our long history of defending the freedom of the seas and the freedom of international commerce.

Since Iran’s aggression and threats to global commerce threaten everyone, I hope all nations will join the United States and its allies in condemning Tehran and imposing significant consequences for its hostile acts.

Look, I understand the significant appetite in Congress for the President to consult with us as he continues to deliberate. Obviously, that is appropriate. My colleagues should share their views with the administration. I understand that the Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees will be holding hearings with senior administration officials after July 4. What is not productive is an effort being promoted by the Democratic leader that would preemptively tie the hands of our military commanders, weaken our diplomatic leverage, embolden our adversaries, and create a dangerous precedent.

Therefore, I will strongly oppose the Udall amendment, which would gratuitously take crucial options off the table. It would hamstring both our commanders and our diplomats, all of whose leverage depends on the knowledge that the United States reserves the right to act forcefully if and when necessary.

Ten years ago, my friend the Democratic leader said verbatim: “When it comes to Iran, we should never take the military option off the table.” That is exactly what the amendment he supports would do.

Nearly every President has utilized a limited use of force against adversaries without pre-authorization from Congress. Nearly every President has done that. Of course, major hostilities require congressional concurrence and the support of the American people. So the Democrats should stop their fear mongering because no one is calling for major military operations—not the President, not his military commanders, not the Republicans in Congress.

This amendment would impose unprecedented limitations that would go far beyond the War Powers Resolution. As drafted, it could prevent U.S. military forces from defending themselves against an attack or conducting a timely counterattack. If we had actionable intelligence that an attack were imminent, it would prevent U.S. forces from doing anything about it. If Israel were attacked, it would prevent U.S. forces from providing immediate assistance to our closest ally in the region.

This amendment flies in the face of many Democrats’ past clarity about Iran, and it casts doubt on our seriousness in defending our own military personnel, much less the freedom of the seas.

The Democrats must set aside the habit of unthinking, reflexive opposi-

tion to every single thing this President does. That is why I call it the Trump derangement syndrome. Perhaps it would help if they were reminded of what the Democratic candidate for President in 2016 had to say about what her policy would have been toward Iran and the Gulf had she been elected.

Here is what Hillary Clinton had to say:

I will reaffirm that the Persian Gulf is a region of vital interest to the United States. . . . We’ll keep the Strait of Hormuz open. We’ll increase security cooperation with our Gulf allies, including intelligence sharing, military support, and missile defense to ensure they can defend against Iranian aggression, even if that takes the form of cyberattacks or other nontraditional threats.

She went on:

Iran should understand that the United States, and I as President, will not stand by as our Gulf allies and partners are threatened.

She concluded by saying:

We will act.

That was from Hillary Clinton.

So nearly every word of that statement accurately describes the policy the Trump administration has pursued for the last 2 years.

Our Gulf allies and partners are threatened by Iran. Israel is threatened by Iran. The Strait of Hormuz is threatened by Iran. And America has been attacked by Iran. The threat is not in doubt. The question is whether Democrats still mean what they said or whether they completely changed their minds about how the U.S. must respond simply because—simply because—the White House has changed parties.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, Mr. President, on a related matter, this week the Senate is considering the National Defense Authorization Act. The current situation with Iran is a stark reminder of our urgent responsibility to ensure our military remains equipped and ready to deter threats and defeat potential challenges to our security.

When we pass the NDAA this week, the Senate will extend a 58-year tradition of authorizing the resources U.S. forces need to stay on the cutting edge. And I hope we will do so with wide, bipartisan support.

This year’s NDAA directs \$750 billion to fund the priorities of the Department of Defense, from the Navy’s fleet strength to missile defense capabilities. It increases procurement for critical weapons systems, doubles down on research and development of next-generation technologies, and makes new investments in training and support services for servicemembers and their families.

In short, this is legislation that sends a clear signal to our men and women in uniform and to the rest of the world. Here is what it says: The United States

takes today's challenges seriously. We take our commitments seriously. And we take our defense seriously.

So especially in light of current events, I was incredulous to hear the Democratic leader call yesterday to postpone moving forward with the NDAA. Apparently, some of our Democratic friends need to go hit the Presidential campaign trail. They can't be here because they have to go campaign for not 1 day but 2 this week. They are too busy to stay in the Senate and authorize the resources that our All-Volunteer Armed Forces rely on. Postpone legislation on our national defense to accommodate the Presidential race in the middle of this ongoing crisis overseas? Come on. Come on.

I am sorry our Democratic friends feel compelled to skip out so they can compete for the favor of "the resistance." The rest of us, the Republican majority—we are going to be right here. We are going to be right here working and voting to make America stronger and safer.

Of course, the NDAA does not exhaust the urgent priorities we should attend to this week. As my Republican colleagues and I have been arguing for 2 months now—2 months—Congress must address the humanitarian crisis down on the southern border. The situation is well documented. Nobody is in doubt.

For months, record numbers of people have arrived at the border, overwhelming—completely overwhelming agencies and facilities. The Department of Homeland Security has had to redirect resources and personnel from other critical missions to assist the Border Patrol. The Secretary of Health and Human Services has said: "We are running out of money." This is the Secretary of Health and Human Services. "We are functionally out of space."

I was encouraged last week when badly needed emergency funding finally garnered some momentum. Under the leadership of Chairman SHELBY and Senator LEAHY, the Appropriations Committee approved funding 30 to 1. That is about as close to bipartisan as it could ever get.

There is no reason, no excuse, why this noncontroversial measure should not get a similar, overwhelmingly bipartisan vote here on the floor this week—this week, not some other time. Actually, there is no reason it shouldn't happen today. Partisan delays have exacerbated this crisis long enough. It is well past time my Democratic colleagues stop standing in the way and let the Senate get this done.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1790, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1790) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2020 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McConnell (for Inhofe) Modified Amendment No. 764, in the nature of a substitute.

A motion was entered to close further debate on McConnell (for Inhofe) Modified Amendment No. 764 (listed above), and, in accordance with the provisions of Rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur on Wednesday, June 26, 2019.

McConnell (for Romney) Amendment No. 861 (to Amendment No. 764), to provide that funds authorized by the Act are available for the defense of the Armed Forces and United States citizens against attack by foreign hostile forces.

McConnell Amendment No. 862 (to Amendment No. 861), to change the enactment date.

McConnell Amendment No. 863 (to the language proposed to be stricken by Amendment No. 764), to change the enactment date.

McConnell Amendment No. 864 (to Amendment No. 863), of a perfecting nature.

A motion was entered to close further debate on the bill, and, in accordance with the provisions of Rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur upon disposition of McConnell (for Inhofe) Modified Amendment No. 764.

McConnell motion to recommit the bill to the Committee on Armed Services, with instructions, McConnell Amendment No. 865, to change the enactment date.

McConnell Amendment No. 866 (to the instructions) Amendment No. 865), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell Amendment No. 867 (to Amendment No. 866), of a perfecting nature.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

9/11 VICTIM COMPENSATION FUND

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, before I begin, I just heard the leader conclude his remarks. He didn't mention the fact today that he is meeting with several constituents of mine from New York, including John Feal and other 9/11 first responders, to discuss a solution to the shortfall in the Victim Compensation Fund.

I am glad the leader has agreed to meet with them. It is a good thing, but

it is not enough to have just a meeting. These brave men and women who selflessly rushed to the towers in the midst of danger, when no one knew what would come next, deserve a commitment that their bill will be considered in a timely manner here on the floor.

So, again, I urge Leader MCCONNELL to listen to the 9/11 first responders. Then give them your commitment, Leader MCCONNELL, that you will put their bill on the Senate floor as soon as it passes the House as a standalone bill. It will pass the House; it will certainly pass the Senate, given the cosponsorship; and the President will sign it. The families of those who, just like our soldiers, rushed to danger to protect our safety can breathe a sigh of relief.

Leader MCCONNELL is the one person—this is not a dual responsibility—I wish it were, at least when we are in the minority, but Leader MCCONNELL is the one person who controls the calendar on the Senate floor. He can stand in the way, as he has done before, or he can do the right thing and commit to give this bill the attention it deserves. I will be eagerly waiting to hear what the leader says after he meets with the first responders this afternoon.

IRAN

Madam President, on Iran and the NDAA, ever since President Trump unilaterally decided to abandon the Iran nuclear agreement, our two countries have been on a path toward greater conflict. In the past month, Iran has heightened its aggressive actions in the region, prompting responses from the U.S. Government. No one looks at Iran through rose-colored glasses. That is why Americans, myself included, are worried about the current course of events. Escalation happens quickly in the Middle East. Without a steady hand at the helm, without a coherent plan or strategy—things this President has lacked since the moment he took office—the danger of stumbling into war is acute.

Democrats have been urging Leader MCCONNELL to allow us a vote on an amendment to the NDAA concerning a possible conflict with Iran. We have an amendment, led by Senators UDALL, MERKLEY, MURPHY, and KAINE—cosponsored by Republican Senators PAUL and LEE—that would prohibit any funds authorized by the current NDAA to be used to conduct hostilities against the Government of Iran.

Again, this is a dangerous situation. Even if the President doesn't intend war, his erratic, inconsistent, and off-the-cuff policies could lead us to stumble into war. When we are at war, it doesn't matter how we got there. The loss of life and the loss of treasure, when we need so much attention here in America, is very real.

So we have an amendment, and we are urging Leader MCCONNELL to allow us a simple vote on an amendment to the NDAA concerning a possible conflict with Iran.